

Contaminated Soil s Clean-up

Contaminated soils were recently removed from a site in Salmon, Idaho, which was used by BLM as a fence post treatment facility in the 1960s and 1970s. Analysis of soils samples indicated the chemical pentachlorophenol (PCP or “penta”) was present in excess of 3,000 parts per million (ppm) in some soil in the area. The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality’s accepted safe level is 2,000 ppm.

In December 1996, a hazardous materials contractor removed 387 tons of contaminated material, which was shipped to a certified landfill in Arlington, Oregon. The area was then backfilled with a ten-to-twelve inch layer of bentonite covered by clean fill to ground level. Field tests taken after completion of the excavation indicated PCP contamination at below 50 ppm. Water and soil samples taken from ground water monitoring wells and the excavated area were analyzed by a certified laboratory and found to contain no contamination, so the site is now ruled to be clean.



Private contractor removing contaminated soil from BLM site.

Weed Control *

The Salmon and Challis National Forests, Salmon BLM, and Lemhi and Custer County Extension Agents have joined forces to control the spread of exotic weed species. One of their main targets is leafy spurge, an aggressive perennial plant that reproduces by seed and a creeping root system. Left unchecked, this plant can spread extensively, replacing native vegetation vital to wildlife and livestock. A promising method of control is the leafy spurge flea beetle, which as larvae feed on the root system of leafy spurge plants, and as adults feed on the foliage. About 47,000 flea beetles have been released onto public and private land over the last five years as part of the joint effort to use biological controls. It is hoped that these flea beetles will continue to establish themselves and reduce the spread of leafy spurge. BLM also cooperates with Lemhi and Custer Counties and USFS in joint chemical control treatment of noxious weeds.

Grazing Management

The 98,000-acre San Felipe allotment contains over 34 miles of stream and riparian habitat. This allotment is a high priority for improved grazing management because of concerns such as Wilderness Study Areas, tribal treaty rights, 26 miles of anadromous and resident fish critical habitat, habitat for three special-status plant species, and wildlife and recreation values/uses. An allotment analysis covering the years 1991-1995 was completed in July 1996. The analysis provided the basis for an Allotment Management Plan (AMP) revision and Environmental Assessment, which are being developed. More than two dozen agencies, organizations, and/or individuals who have expressed an interest in the long-term management of this allotment, are expected to participate in development of the revised AMP.

Watershed Assessment*

BLM is using watershed assessments to provide critical information about entire watersheds that can then be used to improve site-specific planning. The Herd Creek watershed, within the East Fork Salmon River drainage, is currently being assessed by BLM and Salmon and Challis National Forests. The purposes of the analysis are: to identify management needed to preserve and restore anadromous and inland fish habitat; to provide prototype guidance for future analyses of watersheds containing high elevation shrub-steppe communities in the Columbia River Basin; to evaluate a watershed with joint BLM/USFS grazing management; to link broad policy direction defined by land management plans and laws to future site-specific management actions; and to identify opportunities and possible management practices that will enhance protection and restoration of resources within the watershed.

Wild Horse Adoption

The 1996 wild horse gathering removed 85 horses from public land south of Challis, in an effort to restore a thriving and natural ecological balance as directed by Congress in the Wild Horse and Burro Act. All of the animals gathered found new homes through the Adopt-A-Horse program.



BLM wranglers herding wildhorses into the trap at Anderson Ranch south of Challis, Idaho.

Bureau of Land Management • Salmon Field Office

Activities Summary: January 1996 to June 1997



This brochure summarizes the accomplishments of the Salmon (Idaho) BLM Field Office during the past 18 months. The Salmon Field Office’s permanent staff of 55, assisted by additional seasonal staff, oversees management of about 1.3 million acres of public land in the Lemhi and Challis Resource Areas, located in Lemhi and Custer Counties, Idaho. These public lands are used and enjoyed by ranchers, miners, loggers, recreationists, rock hounders, bird and other wildlife watchers, wild horse enthusiasts, hunters, anglers, hikers, skiers, mountain bikers, campers, cultural and historical buffs, and general lovers of the open-space lifestyle, to name only a few. Coordination with federal, state, county, local and private interests increases the Salmon Field Office’s ability to provide for the public good, while assuring the long-term health and productivity of the land for future generations. Throughout this brochure, BLM’s numerous cooperative efforts are noted with an asterisk ().*

Challis Field Station

In spring of 1996, the Challis Resource Area opened a satellite office in Challis, Idaho. The Challis Field Station provides another location to serve area customers, many of whom live in Challis, Clayton and Mackay. The office is staffed part-time by one permanent employee stationed in Challis and by Salmon BLM personnel who work at the Field Station on a rotating basis.

Riparian Habitat Conservation Agreement*

In 1996 the Lemhi County Riparian Habitat Conservation Agreement was completed, the result of two years of meetings and coordination among county government, state and federal agencies, the Shoshone Bannock Tribes, special interest groups, and private citizens. The vision of this group is to reduce risks to listed and potentially listed species, and help keep management in the hands of people closest to the issues. This cooperative approach to resolving riparian/stream habitat issues across land ownership boundaries is crucial to the future economy of the area and the health of the land.



Cooperating participants pose after completing a fence on private land along the Lemhi River.

Youth Employment Program*

In 1997 the Lemhi and Challis Resource Areas were given the 1996 Employer of the Year award by the Lemhi County Youth Employment Program (YEP). In 1995 and 1996, the Salmon Field Office contracted with YEP for almost \$45,000 worth of work which included weed control, spring development, fence construction and maintenance, rebuilding the horse corrals, stream rehabilitation, and the cleanup and restoration of an old homestead.

YEP helps young Lemhi County residents (ages 15 to 20) gain valuable work skills and ethics while working with local employers.



A YEP-built fence along the Continental Divide.

Originally funded by a grant from a private foundation, today YEP contracts with potential employers to obtain the working capital needed to continue this worthwhile program. In completing BLM projects, YEP workers benefit from experiencing the effectiveness of cooperative efforts and learning resource management skills from the agencies and organizations that develop the improvement projects.

Cooperation in Management of Unique Species and Habitats.....

Birch Creek Land Exchange*

In May 1997, the Lemhi Resource Area completed land exchanges with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) to acquire 1,080 acres of private land located in the headwaters of the Birch Creek Valley, about 80 miles southeast of Salmon, Idaho. TNC, a non-profit conservation organization, will retain 80 acres in the area and jointly manage the Birch Creek headwaters for its wetland, fisheries, wildlife and sensitive plant values. A joint management plan involving BLM, TNC, Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG), the Targhee National Forest, and private landowners will provide for long-term management of this beautiful and unique area.

The property contains about 85 percent of the 51 known springs that merge to form Birch Creek. These constantly flowing springs create about 10 miles of perennial streams and a large, continuously saturated wet meadow complex. The headwaters area provides habitat for several sensitive plant species and over 150 species of wildlife; spawning and rearing habitat for brook and rainbow trout; and diverse recreational opportunities such as fishing, wading, hunting, hiking, photography and camping. The area is a "Watchable Wildlife" site and is rich in cultural and historical resources.



Wavy-Leaf Thelypody, a sensitive plant species found in the Challis Resource Area.

Rare Plant Management*

A Habitat Conservation Assessment and a Conservation Strategy were completed in 1996 for wavy-leaf thelypody, a plant species of special concern. The five-year plan is designed to provide management direction for BLM and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) lands containing thelypody populations. Populations of wavy-leaf thelypody were monitored for numbers of individuals at two sites in Custer County on lands owned by the state of Idaho.

Bald Eagle Count*

In January 1997, the 18th annual winter bald eagle count was conducted by interagency teams along the Salmon River corridor. Personnel from BLM, USFS, and IDFG surveyed more than 85 river miles and counted 50 bald eagles, 37 golden eagles, and one peregrine falcon. The number of eagles counted has declined from previous years, possibly due to a change from more thorough helicopter surveys to ground vehicle surveys that miss many eagles on backwater river channels. Vehicle surveys were implemented when budget cuts forced the BLM to drop use of helicopters.



Chilly Slough wetland in the Thousand Springs Valley, northwest of Mackay.

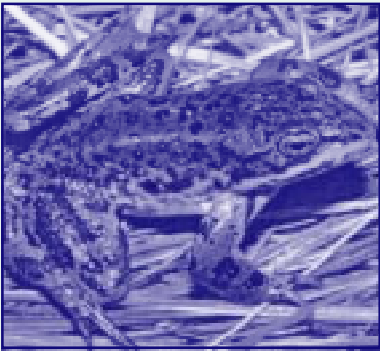
Chilly Slough Wetland Conservation Project*

BLM acquired 1,082 acres of the Chilly Slough wetland through donation, direct purchase, and land exchange since 1990. Altogether, 1,462 acres of the Chilly Slough wetland are accessible to the public for canoeing, wildlife viewing, fishing, trapping and waterfowl hunting. The project partnership is still working with private landowners on future acquisitions of key wetland parcels and providing additional public access.

Last year's work in the wetland included removing old barbed-wire fence, repairing existing boundary fence, and constructing an adjustable barbed-wire fence to help big game passage in the headwater springs area. In 1997, project work will focus on vegetation mapping, rebuilding old boundary fences, and removing old barbed-wire fences that are hazardous to wildlife.

Amphibian and Reptile Field Survey*

In 1996, the first year of a two-year amphibian and reptile "Challenge Cost Share" field survey was conducted in cooperation with Idaho State University and the Salmon and Challis National Forests. Challenge Cost Share studies involve matching funds from private individuals and organizations that are used to carry out on-the-ground inventories, studies and project work. This study is providing data on the distribution and abundance of unique reptiles and amphibians in the Lemhi and Challis Resource Areas. Preliminary results revealed some "hot spots" where populations of these interesting animals are concentrated.



Spotted frog, an amphibian found in east-central Idaho.

Joint Consultation on Endangered Species*

When appropriate, the BLM and Forest Service will consult jointly with National Marine Fisheries Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act. Joint consultation is initiated when BLM and USFS projects and actions overlap, or where BLM and USFS lands are adjacent. This results in less duplication of efforts and fosters a consistent approach to public land management.

Salmon Populations and Habitat Management*

The Model Watershed Project was established in 1992 as part of the Northwest Power Planning Council's plan to rebuild Columbia River salmon runs by protecting and restoring salmon populations and habitat in the northwest. Cooperators in the project include various federal and state agencies, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, individual irrigators and ditch companies, and others. In Idaho the Model Watershed consists of three tributary rivers to the upper Salmon River: the Lemhi River, Pahsimeroi River and East Fork of the Salmon River, all of which lie within the Lemhi and Challis Resource Areas. During the past year, efforts have been focused on the Upper Pahsimeroi and Lower Lemhi Rivers.

Recreation Management

Two Mountain Bike Races on BLM Lands

The annual Whiteknob Challenge Mountainbike Race, which crosses BLM land, continues to draw hundreds of racers and spectators. Each August the race attracts 400 to 500 racers and brings in about \$150,000 to the town of Mackay, Idaho.

In 1996, BLM issued a permit for the first-ever Ride of No Return. Twenty-nine contestants tested their skill over a nine-mile course in the foothills near Salmon, Idaho. Promoters hope to include the 1997 Ride of No Return in a competitive race circuit to attract racers from around the region.

Fee Sites

BLM converted many recreation sites/campgrounds to fee sites in the Lemhi and Challis resource areas. Fees help with the costs of site maintenance. There is no charge for day use, picnicking or boat launching.

Elevenmile River Access*

With the assistance and cooperation of the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) and IDFG, BLM constructed a public river access and boat ramp 11 miles south of Salmon on U.S. Highway 93, along the Salmon River.

Cottonwood Recreation Site Improvements

In 1996, several facilities were constructed at BLM's Cottonwood Recreation Site along the Salmon River, including an access road, a day-use area, a water well, and a picnic cabana. When completed, the site will include a 12-unit RV campground with a full service campsite, restrooms, trails, and a boat launch ramp.

Fire Management*

The Salmon Interagency Fire Center addresses wild and controlled-fire needs for BLM and the Salmon and Challis National Forests. Suppression efforts provide employment and other economic opportunities for local emergency fire fighters, equipment owners and operators, and service-oriented businesses. During the 1996 fire season the Fire Center coordinated initial attack and fire suppression efforts on 39 fires, which totalled 324 acres.